

THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET

A Budget for Veterans by Veterans

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March 17, 2005

The Honorable Jim Nussle
Chairman
House Budget Committee
309 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6065

Dear Representative Nussle:

As you know, the President's fiscal year 2006 budget would provide an appropriation for veterans' medical care that is less than one-half of one percent above the FY 2005 appropriation. Because this amount would not begin to cover employee wage increases and other inflationary costs, it amounts to a substantial cut in funding and thus would unavoidably result in a reduction of critical medical care services for our Nation's sick and disabled veterans. Although we appreciate the adoption of the Bradley amendment which added \$229 million to the President's recommendation for veterans' medical care, this is still grossly inadequate.

In addition, we understand that H. Con. Res. 95 includes instructions to cut spending on mandatory veterans' programs, such as disability compensation, by \$798 million. We think cutting veterans' benefit programs is unconscionable, especially at a time when America's sons and daughters are being wounded and killed every day in Iraq.

The four major veterans organizations of *The Independent Budget*, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, therefore strongly urge support for amendments offered by Representatives Spratt and Obey to increase funding for veterans' programs. Passage of these amendments is crucial if the VA is to maintain an adequate level of health care and other services.

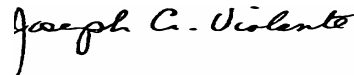
Sincerely,



Rick Jones
National Legislative Director
AMVETS



Richard B. Fuller
National Legislative Director
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Joseph A. Violante
National Legislative Director
Disabled American Veterans



Dennis Cullinan
National Legislative Director
Veterans of Foreign Wars
of the United States

A Joint Project of:

AMVETS
4647 Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, MD 20706
(301) 459-9600
www.amvets.org

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
807 Maine Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20024-2410
(202) 554-3501
www.dav.org

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
801 Eighteenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006-3517
(202) 872-1300
www.pva.org

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
200 Maryland Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 543-2239
www.vfwdc.org